

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8529

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E.O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: OVIP (BARRE, RAYMOND) FR, US  
SUBJECT: FRENCH PRESS COVERAGE OF PRIME MINISTER BARRE'S  
VISIT TO US

1. THE PRESS TREATMENT THUS FAR OF THE IMPENDING BARRE  
VISIT HAS BEEN GENERALLY LOW KEY AND RELATIVELY STRAIGHT-  
FORWARD. THE PREPARATIONS FOR HIS VISIT HAVE BEEN OVER-  
SHADOWED BY THE SCHLEYER KIDNAPPING IN THE FRG, THE  
UNION OF THE LEFT'S INTERNAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE, AND THE  
PARIS VISIT OF POLISH LEADER GIEREK, AS WELL AS A WIDE  
RANGE OF OTHER DOMESTIC POLITICAL EVENTS. FOR THE MO-  
MENT AT LEAST, CRITICIZING BARRE IS NOT IN FASHION IN  
THE MAJORITY, AND THE LEFT DOES NOT HAVE THE TIME TO  
SPARE -- THUS HIS VISIT TO THE US HAS NOT BECOME A  
MAJOR SUBJECT OF DEBATE. LIMITED FRENCH PRESS COVERAGE  
HAS DEVELOPED ALONG THREE MAIN LINES:

-- ON THE BASIS OF BRIEFINGS FROM THE PRIME  
MINISTER'S OFFICE ITSELF, THE MOST COMMON  
THEME HAS EMPHASIZED BARRE'S ROLE AS THE LEA-  
DER OF THE GOVERNMENT (AND AS ITS CHIEF ECONO-  
MIST) VISITING FIRST THE US, AND LATER THE  
USSR, THE FRG AND CHINA TO DISCUSS MATTERS

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OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE AS WELL AS BILA-  
TERAL ISSUES, INCLUDING FOREIGN TRADE, NUCLEAR  
ENERGY, INFLATION, RECYCLING PETRODOLLARS, ETC.  
-- INDEPENDENT SPECULATION HAS FOCUSSED MORE ON  
THE INTERNAL POLITICAL ASPECTS OF BARRE'S  
TRAVELS, PLACING THE EMPHASIS ON THE ENHANCE-  
MENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S PERSONAL STATURE

AS AN INTERNATIONAL STATESMAN. IN THAT CONTEXT, HIS TRIP IS SEEN AS A MEANS FOR STRENGTHENING HIS POLITICAL IMAGE AS WELL AS THAT OF THE MAJORITY AS A WHOLE. HAVING ESTABLISHED A MODUS VIVENDI WITH RPR LEADER CHIRAC, GRANTING BARRE AT LEAST THE NOMINAL LEADERSHIP OF THE MAJORITY, HE IS NOW SEEN AS BEGINNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE BROADLY BASED POLITICAL PRESENCE WHICH WILL PAY DIVIDENDS IN THE UPCOMING LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.

-- A THIRD THEME SEES BARRE'S VISIT AS ALMOST WHOLLY DIRECTED TO PARTISAN POLITICAL GOALS: THE NEW YORK TIMES' STORY (CALLING THE BARRE VISIT A POLITICAL GAMBIT FOR DOMESTIC FRENCH CONSUMPTION) WAS WIDELY REPORTED BUT ATTRACTED NO FURTHER POLITICAL COMMENTARY. BARRE'S PROMISED EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF THE CONCORDE IN WASHINGTON AND THE AIRBUS IN MOSCOW ALSO DREW COMMENTS AS POLITICAL MANEUVERING AND MARKED THE ONLY TIME THAT BARRE'S UPCOMING VISIT MADE THE FRONT PAGES.

ON THE EVE OF THE VISIT, THE PRIME MINISTER'S VOYAGE HAS YET TO RECEIVE PROMINENT ATTENTION. HIS ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON, HOWEVER, SHOULD SPARK A NEW SURGE OF INTEREST.

HARLAN

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## Message Attributes

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